1 2 3 4 5 6 7	RAJ V. ABHYANKER, SBN 233284 Email: raj@trademarkia.com 1580 W. El Camino Real, Suite 10 Mountain View, CA 94040 Telephone: (650) 965-8731 Facsimile: (650) 989-2131  Pro Se Inventor  Raj V. Abhyanker		
8	UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT		
9	NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA		
10	SAN FRANCISCO DIVISION		
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13	RAJ ABHYANKER,	Case No.: 3:20-cv-08248-TBD	
14	Plaintiff,	COMPLAINT FOR PATENT INFRINGEMENT	
15	v.	INFRINGENIENI	
16	AIRBNB, INC.;		
17	Defendant.	DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL	
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19	1. Plaintiff Raj Abhyanker ("Abhyanker", "Plaintiff"), for its Complaint against defendant		
20	Airbnb, Inc. ("Airbnb"), states and alleges as follows in this civil action for patent infringement		
22	arising under the patent laws of the United States, Title 35 of the United States Code:		
23	<u>SUMMARY</u>		
24	2. Plaintiff is the inventor and sole owner of granted U.S. Patent 8,874,489 (the "'489		
25	Patent") being asserted here against Airbnb (Exhibit 1). Plaintiff is a software engineer, and		
26	educated himself to learn patent law by going through law school. The '489 Patent claims		
27	priority back to cases as early as 2007, including the 11/653,194 patent application filed January		
28	2007 ('194 Application). The '489 Patent relates to an invention around short term residential		
I	rentals in a geospatial environment. Plaintiff formed a startup around his inventions in October		

2006, two years prior to the formation of Airbnb. (Exhibits 45-49)

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3. Numerous patent applications were filed in 2007 listing Plaintiff as the inventor 2 including the patent application SHORT TERM RESIDENTIAL SPACES IN A 3 4 GEO-SPATIAL ENVIRONMENT in July 2007 (Exhibit 2, 11/827,774, the "'774 5 application"). The background section of the '774 application and the '489 Patent, succinctly 6 describe the problem solved by the '489 Patent and practiced by Airbnb: 7 BACKGROUND 8 [0002] Travelers often need accommodations. Lodging may be expensive and/or availability may be limited. For 9 example, travel planned on short notice may not offer enough time to book reservations in hotels. The travelers may not 10 know in advance which nights they will need the accommodations, which may further limit the travelers' options. 11 [0003] The travelers may prefer to stay in a home-like setting or lease privately owned property, such as a home. For 12 example, the travelers may prefer a home-like ambience. The 13 home-like ambience may offer a "personal touch" of friendly hosts, including opportunities to build lasting friendships. 14 Amenities may include home cooked meals, pet accommodations, childcare opportunities, attractive lease rates, and 15 residential neighborhood settings. [0004] The travelers, however, may not be able to locate 16 such accommodations. Conversely, the hosts may not have a venue to offer such accommodations. Thus, both travelers and 17 hosts may miss mutually rewarding accommodation opportunities. 18 19 4. A second patent application, titled LODGING AND REAL PROPERTY IN A 20 GEO-SPATIAL MAPPING ENVIRONMENT was filed even earlier on January 12, 2007, also 21 listing Plaintiff as the sole inventor (**Exhibit 3**, the "'194 Application"). The patent application 22 described a technology through which "an online reservation and a financial transaction" (claim 23 3) could be consummated for short term residential listings. Among the embodiments described 24 in the specification include: 25 a. "Guests may be accommodated at night in private bedrooms and breakfast may be served 26 in the morning in any one of the bedroom, a dining room, the host's kitchen" ([0308], 27 '194 Application). 28 b. "Bathrooms may be private, shared (e.g. sharing with other guests, sharing with the

family in Smaller establishments) and/or en-Suite (e.g. where the ablutions are directly

found

its principal place of business at 888 Brannan Street, #4, San Francisco, California 94103. 1 2 9. Defendant Airbnb owns, provides and operates the website www.airbnb.com, 3 www.airbedandbreakfast.com, and related URLs. Defendant also distributes advertisements 4 through various media that instruct recipients to enter a code to redirect to a new location. 5 Specifically, Defendant operates the account "@Airbnb" on Twitter, 6 https://twitter.com/airbnb. Airbnb formed in June 2008, and raised money from external sources 7 using pitch decks including versions of the one shown as **Exhibit 93**. Airbnb's funding history 8 is shown in **Exhibit 94**. 9 JURISDICTION AND VENUE 10 10. Plaintiff's claim for patent infringement against Airbnb arises under the patent laws of 11 the United States including 35 U.S.C. §§ 271 and 281. This Court has subject matter jurisdiction 12 pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §§ 1331 and 1338(a). 13 11. Airbnb owns, operates and conducts business in the state of California and directs 14 advertisements at residents of California – which are covered by at least claim 1 of the '489 15 Patent – and throughout the United States including California and this judicial district. 16 12. Airbnb is currently doing business in this judicial district, has purposefully availed itself 17 of the privilege of conducting business with residents of this judicial district, and has 18 purposefully reached out to residents of this judicial district. 19

- 13. Airbnb has registered itself with the California Secretary of State to do business in
- 14. Airbnb has established sufficient minimum contacts with the State of California such that it should reasonably and fairly anticipate being compelled into court in California.
  - 15. Venue in this judicial district is proper under 28 U.S.C. § 1400(b).

California and has a designated agent incident to such registration.

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16. This Court has personal jurisdiction over Airbnb because (a) Airbnb has committed the acts of patent infringement complained of herein, including but not limited to making, using, distributing, offering for sale and selling infringing products embodying Plaintiff's patented inventions, in this State and this District, and (b) Airbnb has directed its acts of infringement and the other unlawful acts complained of herein at this State and this District.

17. This Court has personal jurisdiction over Airbnb for the additional reason that it has engaged in systematic and continuous contacts with this State and this District by, *inter alia*, regularly conducting and soliciting business in this State and this District, and deriving substantial revenue from products and/or services provided to persons in this State and this District.

## **COUNT I INFRINGEMENT OF THE '489 PATENT**

- 18. Plaintiff realleges and incorporates the allegations of the preceding paragraphs of this complaint as if fully set forth herein.
- 19. Plaintiff is the assignee and owner of all right, title, and interest in and to the '489 Patent. Plaintiff has the exclusive right to make, use, sell, and offer to sell any product embodying the '489 Patent throughout the United States, and to import any product embodying the '489 Patent into the United States.
- 20. The '489 Patent is an invention of systems and methods which commerce around short-term residential spaces in a geo-spatial environment.
- 21. Upon information and belief, Airbnb has been and is now infringing claim 1 of the '489 Patent in the State of California, in this District, and elsewhere in the United States, by, among other things, directly or through intermediaries, making, using, selling and/or offering for sale products with functionalities, covered by claim 1 of the '489 Patent to the injury of Plaintiff at least since April 13, 2017 and possibly sooner. Airbnb is directly infringing, literally infringing, and/or infringing the '489 Patent under the doctrine of equivalents. Airbnb is thus liable for infringement of the '489 Patent pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 271(a).
- 22. Airbnb's infringement of claim 1 of the '489 Patent as evidenced at this time prior to discovery and forming Plaintiff's reasonable belief of infringement is summarized herein. While summarized herein, this summary is by no means and exhaustive summary. There are likely numerous other forms of evidence that exist, which will be further evaluated during discovery.

## 23. With respect to Claim 1. Claim 1 states:

"validating that a place-to-stay listing data is associated with a verified user of the short-term listing server using a processor and a memory;

 guests in different ways, depending on the type of place or experience they booked."

26. Exhibit 96-97 demonstrates evidence of infringement of claim 1 the '489 Patent through descriptions of the technology stack that Airbnb uses which describes the "short-term listing server" (claim 1) used by Airbnb as Amazon Elastic Compute Cloud (Amazon EC2) is a web service for server deployment which provides secure, resizable compute capacity in the cloud. Exhibit 97 further describes that the web server used by Airbnb is a "Nginx. Nginx is a powerful HTTP and proxy server that speeds up content delivery, ensures Airbnb's security and scalability[.]"

27. Exhibit 98 demonstrates additional evidence of infringement of the limitations of claim 1 including "verifying that a set of geospatial coordinates associated with the place-to-stay listing data are validated based on a claimed geospatial location of the place-to-stay listing data associated with the verified user of the short-term listing server" claim element where Airbnb describes "How it works when Airbnb verifies identity" and "When you're asked to confirm your identity, you'll need to add either your legal name and address, or a photo of a government ID (driver's license, passport, or national identity card). Additionally, you may be asked to take a brand-new photo of yourself."

28. In addition, **Exhibit 100** describes that Airbnb enhanced its security verification protocols in April 2017 when "co-founder Nate Blecharczyk unveiled a range of new and important steps we're taking at Airbnb to protect our hosts and guests from fraudsters who seek to undermine the trust and integrity of our community through an online scam known as an account takeover." **Exhibit 101** is a post dated April 13, 2017 in which various techniques are described on enhancing verification including "Login from an unexpected country", "Login from an unexpected IP address, computer, or phone", and "[a]n unexpectedly high number of logins from a particular IP address" which further demonstrate infringement of limitations of claim 1.

29. **Exhibit 99** demonstrates additional evidence of infringement of the limitations of claim 1 including the "determining that a time stamp comprising any one of a creation date and a creation time of the place-to-stay listing data is acceptable based on a validation of the

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place-to-stay listing data of the claimed geospatial location of the verified user of the short-term listing server" claim element when Airbnb describes "Why do I have to complete a verification process to host an experience?" and "[s]pending a few extra minutes on this helps us keep Airbnb secure, fight fraud, and more[.]"

- 30. Exhibit 102 demonstrates additional evidence of infringement of the limitations of claim 1 including the "processing a payment associated with a renter of a space in a private residential home associated with the place-to-stay listing data through the short-term listing server" claim element when Airbnb describes "When am I charged for a reservation?" and "Once the host accepts your request, or if you book a reservation with Instant Book, your payment method will be charged as soon as your reservation is confirmed[.]"
- 31. Exhibit 104 demonstrates additional evidence of infringement of the limitations of claim 1 including the "determining a relative match between a clock associated with the short-term listing server and at least one of another clock of a data processing system of the verified user and a table of the short-term listing server to determine that the time stamp associated with the creation date and the creation time of the place-to-stay listing data is valid and therefore trustable" claim element when Airbnb describes "Unverified Guest made a reservation despite the setting prohibiting unverified guest from reserving" and "Although I responded by messages and the count down clock went away as I did, I hesitated to select Pre-Approve or Decline with the worry that this might either allow the unverified guest to proceed with booking or that I would decline guests that are probably totally fine... And then of course I worry that I might get ding'd for slow response time if I don't select either course of action[.]"
- 32. Exhibit 105-110 demonstrates additional evidence of infringement of the limitations of claim 1 including the "determining a relative match between a clock associated with the short-term listing server and at least one of another clock of a data processing system of the verified user and a table of the short-term listing server to determine that the time stamp associated with the creation date and the creation time of the place-to-stay listing data is valid and therefore trustable" claim element.

33. For example, in <b>Exhibit 105</b> , a Level 10 user of Airbnb writes "I pre-approved them and			
a few minutes later retracted that to override the response-time clock." In Exhibit 106, a Level			
1 user asks "I have a guest that has requested a reservation, however I cannot reply to the guest			
and receive a message that states the guest needs to finish the verification process. That's great,			
but the 24 hour clock continues to tick and I continue to receive messages that seem to allow me			
to accept or reject the request." Exhibit 107 describes through a Level 10 user writing on			
December 14, 2018 that "At some point there was definitely a countdown timer for the 14 day			
review period. My memory is that once you got into only 1 day left, it would show a countdown			
in hours." Exhibit 108 shows that Airbnb itself asks that hosts "[m]aintain a high response rate			
by replying to booking inquiries and reservation requests within 24 hours." In Exhibit 109,			
Airbnb describes "What are response rate and response time and how are they calculated?" as			
"Your response rate is the percentage of new inquiries and reservation requests you responded			
to (by either accepting/pre-approving or declining) within 24 hours in the past 30 days." further			
supporting infringement of claim 1 of the '489 Patent.			

34. Exhibit 110 demonstrates additional evidence of infringement of the limitations of claim 1 including the "automatically deleting a publishing of bookable dates now passed of the place-to-stay listing data associated with a host profile in a neighborhood area within a neighborhood boundary associated with the place-to-stay listing data of the verified user of the short-term listing server based on a requested expiration date" claim element when Airbnb describes "How do I make dates available or blocked on my calendar?" and "The availability window moves forward every day, so as time passes new dates will automatically become available."

35. Upon information and belief, Airbnb will continue to directly infringe claim 1 of the '489 Patent unless enjoined.

36. In September 2016, Plaintiff reached out to Airbnb associate general counsel Alica Delvalle ("Delvalle") to explore whether Airbnb wanted to acquire Plaintiff's invention claimed through the '489 Patent. (**Exhibit 88-89**). Delvalle did not respond to Plaintiff, and no responsive communication was received.

37. In February 2019, Plaintiff approached Megan Cesare-Eastman, lead counsel to Airbnb

responsibilities in writing on July 1, 2007 (Exhibit 86). 1 2 46. Since Plaintiff's startup was an early stage startup, Hoffman was investing not only in 3 Plaintiff's startup but in Plaintiff himself as an individual entrepreneur, which is a customary 4 practice when investments are made in pre-revenue early stage startups to invest in individual 5 entrepreneurs around promising startups. 6 47. As a fiduciary who had also agreed to invest in Plaintiff and Plaintiff's startup, Hoffman 7 received confidential diligence documents on or about October 18, 2007. 8 48. Upon reason and belief, about three years later, in 2010, Hoffman breached his 9 fiduciary obligations to Plaintiff by disclosing trade secret and intellectual property confidential 10 information he was entrusted by Plaintiff to maintain confidentiality to Airbnb and at least one 11 other startup. 12 49. Hoffman's breaches of fiduciary duties actually and proximately caused harm to 13 Plaintiff because Hoffman was aware that breaching fiduciary duties owed to Plaintiff for 14 information entrusted to Hoffman would result in harm to Plaintiff because Hoffman knew that 15 he, as an experienced and highly-successful investor and Internet entrepreneur, shouldered 16 influence such that his unauthorized disclosures to Airbnb would be taken seriously and would 17 be likely be utilized by Airbnb and other entrepreneurs to willfully infringe on Plaintiff's 18 patents including the 489 Patent. 19 50. Even more evidence of willful infringement of the '489 Patent is found through 20 Airbnb's lead investor in its seed round Sequoia Capital including its partner Bryan Schreier 21 ("Schreier"). Plaintiff pitched his inventions, including the concepts claimed in the '489 22 Patent, to five Sequoia Capital partners over two meetings in the summer of 2007. (Exhibits 23 **4-15**) This was about eighteen months prior to Sequoia Capital leading the seed round 24 investment in Airbnb. 25 51. In addition, Schreier expressed strong interest in becoming the Chief Executive Officer 26 for Plaintiff's startup in the fall of 2007. (Exhibits 16-44) Upon reason and belief, Schreier was 27 appraised about Plaintiff's inventions and concepts protected through patents including 28 inventive concepts embodied in the '489 Patent. When Schreier was not selected to be the

later, Schreier found a job at Sequoia Capital in December 2007. (Exhibits 40)

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Chief Executive Officer of Plaintiff's company, he was disappointed. (Exhibits 35) Months

60. Pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 284, Plaintiff is entitled to damages adequate to compensate for

have irreparably harmed Plaintiff.

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3 the infringement. 4 61. Airbnb infringement has been and is willful and, pursuant to 35 U.S.C. § 284, Plaintiff is 5 entitled to treble damages. Airbnb willful infringement is based at least on Airbnb's knowledge 6 of Plaintiff, its products, and its patents since at least as September 21, 2016 as set forth above. 7 Defendant conduct is egregious as it continued offering, selling, making and using the 8 Infringing Products despite knowledge of the infringement. Defendant has either willfully and 9 wantonly infringed the '489 Patent or has recklessly avoided knowledge of its own 10 infringement, even when faced with knowledge of Plaintiff's own products and patents. 11 62. This case is "exceptional" within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. § 285, and Plaintiff is 12 entitled to an award of attorneys' fees. 13 REQUEST FOR RELIEF 14 WHEREFORE, Plaintiff requests that the Court find in its favor and against Airbnb, and 15 that the Court grant Plaintiff the following relief: 16 a. Judgment that claim 1 of the '489 Patent has been infringed by Airbnb; 17 b. Judgment that Airbnb has willfully infringed the '489 Patent; 18 c. Judgment that Airbnb accounts for and pay to Plaintiff all damages and costs incurred 19 by Plaintiff, caused by Airbnb's infringing activities complained of herein; 20 d. That Plaintiff be granted pre-judgment and post-judgment interest on the damages; 21 e. An award of damages against Airbnb adequate to compensate Plaintiff for the 22 infringement that has occurred, but in no event less than a reasonable royalty as 23 permitted under 35 U.S.C. § 284, together with prejudgment interest from the date 24 infringement began; 25 f. That this Court declare this an exceptional case and award Plaintiff reasonable 26 attorneys' fees and costs in accordance with 35 U.S.C. § 285; and 27 g. That Plaintiff be granted such other and further relief as the Court may deem just and 28 proper under the circumstances.

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2	2 DEMAND FOR JURY 7	DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL		
3	3 Plaintiff, under Rule 38 of the Federal Rules of Civ	Plaintiff, under Rule 38 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, requests a trial by jury or		
4	4 any issues so triable by right.			
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6	6 Dated: November 23, 2020 LEGALFOI	RCE RAPC WORLDWIDE P.C.		
7	II .			
8	8/s/ Raj A	Abhyanker		
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